(c) and (d) Four laning of Amritsar-Pathankot has been approved under NHDPIII which also includes widening of structures. As per DPR submitted by Consultant, provision for construction of Dina Nagar bypass has been made. Therefore, there is no proposal at present to widen any structure in Dina Nagar.

Condition of Highway Nos. 55, 31 and 31A

†1955. SHRI SAMAN PATHAK: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the deteriorating condition of Highway Nos. 55, 31 and 31A;

(b) the steps being taken by Government to improve these Highways;

(c) whether Government are considering to provide a package to save these Highways which is the only lifeline of Darjeeling and North East; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI K.H. MUNIYAPPA): (a) and (b) National Highways Nos. 55, 31 and 31A are kept in traffic worthy conditions for smooth running of the traffic under different development and maintenance programmes undertaken from time to time depending upon availability of fund and inter se priority.

(c) and (d) Four/Six laning of National Highway No. 31 from Purnea in Bihar to Siliguri in West Bengal and Bijni in Assam to Jalukabari in Assam is in progress as part of East-West Corridor. From Siliguri to Bijni, an alternative alignment passing through Mainaguri, Dhupguri, Falakata, Sonapur and joining the original alignment near Salsalabari on NH-31C in West Bengal is identified as part of East-West Corridor and its DPR is in progress. Four laning of the stretch of NH-31 from Bakhtiarpur to Purnea in Bihar is also identified under NHDP Phase-III. Similarly, improvement of National Highway No. 31A is included in Phase-A of Special Accelerated Road Development Project for North-Eastern Region (SARDP-NE).

Accidents of old supply vessels

1956. DR. M.A.M. RAMASWAMY: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there have been fatal accidents of supply vessels which are 25 years and above old;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether any enquiry has been ordered in such cases;

(d) whether it is a fact that old vessels are being used as supply vessels by ONGC which are highly vulnerable to storms; and

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(e) if so, the steps proposed to be taken by Central Government regarding safety of crew members and increasing crew insurance of such boats?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) to (e) Although there have been no fatal accidents of supply vessels which are 25 years and above old, two shipping casualties have occurred *viz.*; Samudrika-10, flag India aged 21 years which sank, off Mumbai on 9th July 2007 and Samudra Suraksha, flag India aged 24 years which sank of Mumbai on 2nd August 2005. In the case of Samudrika-10, nine crew members were rescued, six lost their lives and two are still missing. Regarding Samudra Suraksha casualty occurred when the vessel hit Mumbai High North production platform. This resulted in the total loss of the platform. Out of the total of 383 personnel on the platform, 361 were rescued 10 died and 12 are missing. Out of a crew of 84 belonging to Samudra Suraksha, one person died. In both the cases, the Directorate General of Shipping have ordered a preliminary inquiry by Principal Officer, Mercantile Department, Mumbai to investigate the circumstances leading to these casualties. In case of "Samudra Suraksha", a formal investigation to be conducted Judicial Magistrate has also been ordered. As per records maintained by the Directorate General of Shipping on the registration of ships, the average age of Indian registered offshore supply vessels operating in the offshore areas is about 22 years. They are issued with statutory certificates with respect to safety, construction of ships, machinery and equipments for undertaking safe voyages during all weather conditions that include stormy seas and adverse weather conditions. They become vulnerable to storms if not maintained by the ship owner during the currency of validity of statutory certificates. The crew are engaged under the Articles of agreement as per the provisions of the Indian Merchant Shipping Act, 1958. The welfare and security measures including insurance are addressed in the collective Bargaining Agreement entered into by ship owners and Seafarers' trade unions. However, to improve crew safety, structural examination and enhanced Flag State Inspection of all Indian offshore supply vessels of more than 15 years of age has been put in place.

Sending Indian into Space

1957. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA:
SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether ISRO proposes to launch an Indian into Space;

(b) if so, whether ISRO is developing its indigenous technology for this historic event, or already proven technology in this field available with advanced countries would be utilized;

(c) the likely expenditure on this project; and

(d) the timeframe for hoisting an Indian into Space and the perspective planning of such other projects?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (SHRI PRITHVIRAJ CHAVAN): (a) No, Sir. However, preliminary studies are being undertaken towards, technology development.